Africa - East

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Conquest of a Wilderness Empire

A GENERATION ago the most splendid books of adventure were the narratives of exploration and travel in equatorial Africa, books like the works of Speke and Grant, Sir Samuel Baker's "Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia," "The Victoria Nyanza," and "Ismailia," and Henry M. Stanley's "How I Found Livingstone" and "In Darkest Africa." The daring of the explorers, the brilliant exotic coloring of the scenes, the hunting of elephants, lions, rhinoceroses, the wars and slave raids of the blacks, made a fascinating chapter of romance.

One may compare it with the group of narratives recording the first gropings of Spanish adventurers through the southern half of the future United States, the perilous journeyings of Ponce de Leon, of Narvaez, of Coronado. And from the comparison one may draw the conclusion that, just as the then untraveled wilderness has become the thickly populated and highly developed region from Florida to California, a region already rich in history, so the jungles and foothills of the Congo and Kilimanjaro may presently become highly civilized and thickly populated States, closely knit with the life of other nations, and writing brilliant pages of history.

Africa is today "the land of a miraculous future," just as 400 years ago, the vast tract between Ponce de Leon's fountain of youth and Coronado's golden strand was a mystery-shrouded wilderness, hiding a magical promise of things to come.

A generation ago Bismarck conceived for Germany, then sated, as he said, with European conquest, a great colonial empire that would give the Germans a world standing comparable to that of England. By a striking coincidence, at just the same time vanquished France entered on a great colonial period, untrumpeted, unadvertised, and both in the extent of her colonies, her humane dealing with native races, and the success of her colonial administration France did far better than Germany.

Besides the safety and well-being of the natives, a reason why Germany should, in his view, be excluded from Africa was stated by General Jan Christian Smuts. "East Africa," he said, "is "enormously valuable and productive. "The Germans spent millions in develop- "ing it, and the mere suggestion that "any part of it should be returned to "Germany is preposterous. The native "population has stood magnificently by "us, and I shudder to think what would "happen if any part of the territory were "given back to Germany. All the Afri- "can colonies would be aghast at the "mere idea."

But General Smuts holds another consideration to be even more vital and decisive. "We are all aware," he said, "of the great German plan before the "war, which no doubt is still in the "background of many minds, of creating "a great Central African Empire, which "would embrace not only the Kameruns "and East Africa, but also Portuguese "territory and the Congo—an enormous "area with a very large population, in "which it would be possible to train "one of the most powerful armies the "world has ever seen. We were not "aware of the military value of the na- "tives until this war opened our eyes. "It will be for statesmen of the future "to ask whether they are going to allow "a state of affairs like that to become "a menace, not only to Africa, but to "Europe itself. I hope one of the results "of this war will be some convention or "arrangement among the nations inter- "ested in Central Africa by which the "military training of the natives in that "area will be absolutely forbidden. If "that is not done, I fear I can see armies "trained, which, if properly led and "equipped by whites, might prove a "danger to civilization itself."

The East African territory, from which the last German forces have now been

driven, is of immense area, nearly equal to the combined extent of the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires in Europe, and possesses a coast line of about 620 miles. As compared with the regions which afterward became the United States, this East African area has a fairly dense population of about 8,000,000 natives, mostly of tribes of mixed Bantu race. Near the coast are forests of mangrove, cocoa palm, and tamarind; in the higher regions, cotton tree, sycamore, banyan, and other trees grow. In the coast lands there are plantations of cocoa palms, coffee, vanilla, tobacco, caoutchouc, cocoa, sugar, tea, cotton, cardamon, and cinchona, from which quinine is prepared. Fibre plants are also successfully cultivated, and there are some 1,000,000 head of cattle and 6,000,000 sheep and goats within the territory.

Minerals known to exist are coal, iron, lead, copper, mica, and salt. Agates, topaz, moonstones, and garnets are found in large quantities.

The probable continuation of the Cape-to-Cairo Railroad through this region would add vastly to the potentialities for the rapid development of this very rich region, while this railroad will be supplemented by the excellent steamboats that already ply on the Nile as far south as Gondokoro.

German East Africa Conquered

It was announced officially on Dec. 3, 1917, that East Africa had been completely cleared of Germans. The press dispatch was as follows:

> Telegraphing under date of Dec. 1, General Vandeventer, (commander of the military forces in East Africa,) has reported that reconnoissances have definitely established that German East Africa is completely cleared of the enemy. Thus the whole of the German overseas possessions have passed into our hands and those of our Belgian allies. Only a small German force now remains in being. This has taken refuge in adjoining Portuguese territory, and measures are being taken to deal with it.

The conquest of East Africa deprived Germany of her largest colonial possession. Its area—about 384,170 square miles—is almost double that of Germany. It lies on the East Coast of Africa, and the contiguous States are Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, Portuguese East Africa, and British East Africa. German colonization began with an expedition sent out by the newly organized German Colonization Society in 1884, which secured treaty rights over the territories of Useguha, Nguru, Usagara, and Ukami. Owing to the tremendous British influence in this part of the world, the German movement was at first carried on in secret. The German East Africa Company came into existence in 1885, and in that and the following year extended German dominions along the coast from Somaliland to the mouth of the Rovuma, skipping the British territory around the mouth of the Mombasa. In 1886 an Anglo-German agreement fixed the northern boundary of the German colony; the southern was fixed the next year. In 1888 the Sultan of Zanzibar ceded his possessions on the mainland (reduced already to a narrow strip along the coast) for an annual rental. This agreement was frustrated in practice, however, by an outbreak among the Coast Arabs; Germany lacked sufficient forces in the colony to put down the rebels, and they speedily made themselves masters of all but two of the seacoast towns. Early in 1889 the company applied for aid to the Government of Germany, received the assistance of a military force, and put down the rebellion within the year. The Sultan of Zanzibar gave up all claim to his mainland possessions for the sum of $952,000, and on Jan. 1, 1891, the colony came definitely under the control of the German Government. Native uprisings in 1905 were followed by investigation and reform of the treatment of the natives. The forces of Great Britain and Germany have been fighting in German East Africa since immediately after the outbreak of war.

Other Colonies Germany Lost

Germany's other colonies were lost as follows:

Togoland, captured by a Franco-British

MAP SHOWING GERMANY'S LOST COLONIES IN AFRICA

force Aug. 26, 1914; area, 33,700 square miles. In 1914 estimated revenue $875,000 and expenditures $1,045,000. In 1913 imports were valued at 10,600,000 marks and exports at 9,100,000 marks.

German Samoa, captured by a New Zealand expedition Aug. 30, 1914; area, 1,000 square miles, (Savali and Upolu.) In 1914 estimated revenue $2,975,000 and expenditures $3,450,000. In 1913 imports valued at 5,700,000 marks and exports at 5,300,000 marks.

German New Guinea, consisting of Kaiser Wilhelm's Land, (70,000 square miles;) Bismarck Archipelago, (20,000 square miles,) captured by an Australian expedition Sept. 11, 1914. Imports 5,872,000 marks and exports 5,041,000.

Caroline, Solomon, Marshall Islands, captured by the Japanese Oct. 7, 1914; area, 10,500 square miles. Revenue estimated at $525,000 and expenditures at $957,500.

Kiao-Chau, surrendered to a Japanese and British force, former taking precedence, Nov. 7, 1914; area, 200 square miles. Revenue for 1914 estimated at 8,060,000 marks and expenditures at 18,410,000. In 1912 imports valued at 121,254,000 marks and exports at 79,640,000.

German Southwest Africa was captured by General Botha with the Union of South Africa troops, July 9, 1915; area, 322,450 square miles. In 1914, estimated revenue, $5,875,000, and expenditure, $10,085,000. In 1913, imports valued at 43,400,000 marks, and exports at 70,300,000 marks.

The Kamerun was completely occupied

by a Franco-British force Feb. 18, 1916; area, 300,000 square miles. In 1914, estimated revenue, $2,827,500, and expenditure, $4,315,000. In 1913, imports valued at 34,000,000 marks, and exports at 29,100,000 marks.

Forces in East Africa

No German foreign dependency, not even German Southwest Africa, has revealed such a thorough preparation for the great war as German East Africa. Although the white force consisted of only three regiments, there had been organized, armed, and drilled a native Arab and negro force of 50,000 under white officers. Over 100 Krupp 77-millimeter fieldpieces had been imported, together with several hundred machine guns and quantities of barbed wire, engineering implements, and munitions of all sorts. Finally, a great wireless station had been erected in the Kilimanjaro, which, via the station at Togoland, on the other side of the continent, could communicate with Berlin.

So elaborate had been the German preparation that the Allies could do little during the first year of the war. With the conquest of German Southwest Africa completed, however, the army of the Union of South Africa was released, and preparations were made to reduce the vast territory by investing its most populous and civilized regions, which resulted in its conquest.

Latest Official Report

The latest official report which preceded the conquest of the territory was issued by the British War Office on Sept. 26, 1917, and was as follows:

As a result of our operations in East Africa the enemy forces remaining in the field were, at the beginning of September, distributed in three principal groups: (1) In and to the north of the Mbemkuru Valley, [which is in the southeast midway between Kilwa and the Portuguese frontier;] (2) in the Lukeledi Valley to the southwest of Lindi, [and about fifty miles south of the Mbemkuru River;] (3) based on Mahenge, [midway between Lake Nyasa and the coast.] In addition, there were more or less important detachments in subsidiary areas. Groups 1 and 2, of about equal strength, comprised rather more than half the total German forces, including detachments.

On Sept. 19 our advance from the direction of Kilwa [which is 140 miles south of Dares-Salaam] was resumed, and on that day the enemy was driven from his advanced positions covering the waterholes at Mihambia, (forty-two miles south by west from Kilwa, and twenty-one miles north of the principal passage over the Mbemkuru River at Nakiku and Natshihu.) Further pressure by our columns at this point resulted in the evacuation of Mihambia by the enemy after a stubborn resistance, and a retreat of seven and one-half miles to Mpingo.

Simultaneously, our other columns moved to the attack of a larger German group strongly established at Ndessa, (fourteen and one-half miles southwest of Mihambia.)

On Sept. 21 the enemy was compelled to evacuate Ndessa by the threat of our enveloping movement. On Sept. 23 the entire enemy force was falling back to the Mbemkuru, pursued by our main columns, when it found its line of retreat barred in the vicinity of Mawereyne (twelve and one-half miles south of Ndessa) by our Nigerian infantry. After severe fighting, the enemy, having lost heavily, dispersed in small parties, which beat a hasty retreat to the river.

In this area, almost waterless at present, and covered with dense bush, our movements have been hampered by the necessity of cutting roads through the tropical vegetation and driving the enemy from the few waterholes.

In the western area our columns from the south and southwest are engaged with enemy detachments at Mponda's, (on the Luwegu River, fifty-three miles south of Mahenge,) and to the northeast of the Ligamba Hills, (thirty-three miles southwest of Mahenge,) while Belgian forces are approaching Mahenge, and the communications from Mahenge toward Mgangira and Liwale, from the north. [These places are, respectively, sixty and 120 miles southeast of Mahenge.]

In each of these quarters the enemy is being pressed, and appreciable losses are being inflicted on his troops.